

# 'SUDETEN' CLAIMED BY BRONX FUEHRER

## Lyons Asks Freeing of Marble Hill From Manhattan 'Yoke' —Isaacs for Plebiscite

Fifty-two acres on the north bank of the murky Harlem Ship Canal became a new "Sudetenland" yesterday afternoon as Borough President James J. Lyons of the Bronx called for the annexation of the Marble Hill section of Manhattan on the ground that the canal is the natural geographical division between the two boroughs and that the residents of the area are linked to the people of the Bronx by common tradition, language, culture and community life.

One realm and one people is the aim of Mr. Lyons, who asserted the right of the Marble Hill residents to free themselves from "Manhattan bondage" under the democratic principle of self-determination.

### Isaacs for Appeasement

In the interest, apparently, of preserving peace, Borough President Stanley M. Isaacs of Manhattan adopted an attitude of appeasement when informed of Mr. Lyons's "designs" on Marble Hill. Mr. Isaacs, who declared himself a firm believer in democratic principles, said he would be willing to give up the territory if a plebiscite conducted "either by the League of Nations or the Board of Estimate" indicated the willingness of Marble Hill citizens to cut themselves off from Manhattan and join "The Second Bronx." He expressed serious doubts, however, that any one would want to leave Manhattan for the Bronx.

A cursory survey yesterday showed that the disputed area contains no munitions plants or mineral deposits of important military value, nor, for that matter, does it contain strategic fortifications. Also, it would be of slight use as a naval base. All the Bronx would acquire by annexation would be a number of ordinary city blocks, some fashionable apartment buildings, freight yards, a few stores and 5,000 to 6,000 new subjects.

It is noteworthy that Mr. Lyons's claim is based both on legal grounds and the thesis that changed con-

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ditions give rise to changed circumstances.

At one time Marble Hill was on the south bank of what is now the Harlem Ship Canal, extending from the body of Manhattan in the shape of an oversized thumb and separated from the Bronx by the winding Spuyten Duyvil Creek, which connected the Harlem and Hudson Rivers. In 1903, however, the War Department eradicated the creek by filling it in and diverting the waters into a new channel south of Marble Hill. Marble Hill was thus isolated from the Manhattan mainland. Although it remained politically a part of Manhattan, it became geographically a part of the Bronx.

Mr. Lyons's "legal" claim to the territory is based on a section in the Administrative Code describing the boundaries of Local Improvement District 24. The section defines the district as "that portion of the country of the Bronx within and bounded by a line beginning at the Harlem River and Fordham Road, to Jerome Avenue, to East 200th Street, to the Southern Boulevard, to Pelham Avenue, to the Bronx River, to the New York City line, to the Spuyten Duyvil Creek, to the Harlem River, to the place of beginning."

It is his contention that since there is no longer a Spuyten Duyvil Creek, the wording of the section places Marble Hill within the confines of the Bronx.

"In these troubled times," Mr. Lyons declared, "when many foreign rulers are taking over new territories and subjecting people to domination against their will, it seems inconceivable that right here in the City of New York a free people should likewise be subjected to domination against their will."

"Most of these people [the residents of Marble Hill] participate in the communal life of the Bronx and resent being obliged to pay their taxes in Manhattan and being subjected generally to Manhattan's domination. The children attend Public School 7, corner of West 232d Street and Kingsbridge Avenue in the Bronx. The Catholics are in St. John's Parish and attend the church located at 3,027 Kingsbridge Avenue, the Bronx. The people of Marble Hill make use of the Public Library at 3,027 Kingsbridge Avenue, the Bronx."

"These good people of Marble Hill enter wholeheartedly into the social, civic, fraternal and communal life of the Bronx and are genuine Bronxites at heart, notwithstanding the yoke of the imaginary line of the abandoned creek that makes them Manhattanites."

"The indefinite language used in the administrative code, giving the boundary lines of the local improvement districts of Washington Heights in Manhattan and Van Cortlandt in the Bronx, raises a grave question as to whether this Marble Hill territory is in Manhattan or in the Bronx."

"The natural physical line of division should be the Harlem Ship

Canal, which connects the Hudson and Harlem Rivers. It seems most undemocratic to keep these good people of Marble Hill in Manhattan bondage when they want to be residents of the Bronx, the borough of universities and culture and the most beautiful borough in the world.

"I, therefore, strongly urge that steps be taken to lift this Manhattan yoke from these residents of Marble Hill and restore them to the Bronx. This year is the tercentenary of the Bronx, and it would be a fitting time to free Marble Hill from its Manhattan bondage. Old Jonas Bronck will look down from his heavenly home with a feeling of joy and gratitude if these people of Marble Hill are restored to the Bronx."

Informed of Mr. Lyons' communiqué, Mr. Isaacs asserted that he would agree to give up Marble Hill if the people were in favor of a change.

"With Wilson," he declared, "I believe in the self-determination of a free people. If the people show in a plebiscite, conducted either by the League of Nations or the Board of Estimate, that they want to join the Bronx, that's all right with me. But, personally, I don't believe that anybody would want to give up Manhattan for the Bronx."

Announcement of Mr. Lyons's claim to Marble Hill followed receipt of a letter from Theodore R. Kupferman of 185 McClellan Street, the Bronx, who made an inquiry concerning the boundaries of the county and borough of the Bronx. In an answer to Mr. Kupferman the borough president informed him of the history of the Spuyten Duyvil Creek.

Political observers were at a loss to predict where Mr. Lyons would turn next if he is successful in acquiring Marble Hill. It was thought likely that he might consider a "Drang Nach Osten" policy. Some of fertile Westchester lies there.